22 April 2004

Original: English

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund
Annual session 2004
14 to 23 June 2004, Geneva
Item 12 of the provisional agenda*
Field visits

Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund
Annual session 2004
7-11 June 2004
Item 8 of the provisional agenda**
Reports on field visits of Executive Board members

Report on the joint field visit of Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP to Guatemala, 21 March to 2 April 2004

I. Introduction

Organization

1. Twenty-one members[1] of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) made a joint field visit to Guatemala from 21 March to 2 April 2004.

Objective

2. The purpose of the joint field visit was to help members of the Executive Boards to understand how and the extent to which the United Nations System contributes to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals in Guatemala. In this regard, attention was also paid to donor coordination, both at multilateral and bilateral levels, as well as to the simplification and harmonization process, the resident coordinator system and the efforts to combat HIV/AIDS.

3. The mission observed: (a) progress made on simplification and harmonization, including lessons learned from using the approved tools and their links to national development strategies, poverty reduction strategies and the Millennium Development Goals; (b) the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including the functioning of theme groups and the relationships between the United

* DP/2004/L.2.
** E/ICEF/2004/8.
[1] See list of participants (annex 1).

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Nations country team, the donor community, the International Financial Institutions (IFI) and civil society; and (c) the United Nations contribution to the national HIV/AIDS programme.

Structure

4. The joint field visit comprised four parts: (a) a two-day joint introduction, (b) four days of joint visits to project sites, (c) two days of agency-specific project visits by all Board members, (d) one day of agency meetings; and (f) one day of joint wrap-up of the mission.

II. Background

Political context: Revitalization of Peace Accords

5. Guatemala is in a post-conflict situation. In 1996, the Government of Guatemala and the National Guatemalan Revolutionary Unit signed the Peace Accords, ending 36 years of internal strife and establishing a development agenda as the basis of firm and lasting peace. The Peace Accords highlighted, among other issues, the fact that the political, economic and social exclusion of a major sector of the Guatemalan population was one of the most important root causes of the civil war.

6. Popular discontent with the Government over corruption and the failure to improve socio-economic conditions, combined with confrontation between the Executive branch, the political parties of the opposition, civil society, including indigenous peoples, and the private sector, led to a high level of political and social tensions in the run-up to the general election in November 2003.

7. Mr. Oscar Berger won Guatemala's run-off ballot and inaugurated a new administration in 2004. In support of the "Declaration of Commitment to the Full Effect and Implementation of the Peace Accords", made on 10 July 2003 by all political parties, the new administration placed at the top of the political agenda the revitalization of the Peace Accords as a national project of unity and as the basis for a national agreement on democratic governance.

8. The commitments adopted in the Peace Accords constitute a programme of action for public administrations in Guatemala and promote an enabling environment for sustainability of peace and democracy. They are based on the assumption that Guatemala is a multi-ethnic and multicultural society.

9. It is important to highlight the role played by the United Nations in the support, advocacy and monitoring of the implementation of the Peace Accords through the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) as well as the important roles played by all of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes represented in Guatemala. Guatemala is a successful example of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations.

10. By decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the mandate of MINUGUA will come to an end on 31 December 2004.

11. In light of this decision, MINUGUA has defined a strategy of transition in order to assure conditions for the sustainability of the peace process. This strategy of transition includes the strengthening of key national institutions that play an

important role in the implementation of the Peace Accords, as well as the capacity of several civil society organizations to implement a more effective social audit[2] and extend their influence in the national debate on the main challenges faced by Guatemala.

12. MINUGUA has also recommended four areas on which UNDP and all other agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations System should focus their attention: (a) education at all levels, (b) capacity-building, (c) rule of law, and (d) ownership and institutionalization of the process of transition and peace-building.

Socio-economic context

13. After the signing of the Peace Accords, important progress was made in Guatemala in economic, political and social areas. Even so, great challenges remain in security and human rights, economic growth and social development.

14. The growth rate of per capita income has decreased constantly since 1999, and a serious economic deceleration has resulted from internal and external, structural and circumstantial factors, including the coffee crisis. Inequity continues to be one of Guatemala's major problems, evidenced by the fact that the poorest segments of the population have been most affected by the deceleration. Therefore, even though the proportion of those living in poverty did not vary significantly in recent years, the percentage of people suffering extreme poverty increased by 5 percentage points between 2000 and 2002. The situation has become especially acute in rural areas.

15. Another socio-economic challenge in Guatemala is the lack of food security, which is associated with increased levels of chronic malnutrition in children less than five years of age. Additionally, there are environmental concerns regarding land and water.

16. The coverage of primary education and preventive health care has increased in recent years, and if current programmes continue, it is expected that Guatemala may reach the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education coverage and reduction of infant and child mortality. Nevertheless, challenges remain in these two areas as well. For example, it is estimated that only 4 out of every 10 children who start primary school complete the third grade, and only 3 out of 10 are promoted to sixth grade, while in secondary education coverage does not even reach one third of the young people who should be attending school. As for health, the morbidity and mortality indicators of Guatemala are among the worst in the region, primarily because of infectious diseases and treatable nutritional problems that affect the most vulnerable proportion of the population.

17. In health, as well as in education, problems exist in equity, gender balance and relevance of the services provided. It is estimated that up to 20 per cent of the population does not have access to any type of institutional health services. In addition, disparities are evident between urban and rural areas. Urban residents have access to more technology and better-qualified personnel than do rural dwellers, who generally have access only to a very basic package of services in the case of health, and to an education of lesser quality. Moreover, the quality and efficiency of

[2] A social audit is a systematic review by all stakeholders, including civil society, of progress made towards achieving the social objectives of public services, including through the management of funds.

private education and health care is not guaranteed, as government regulation of these services is inadequate. Additionally, reported problems of corruption at the Guatemalan Social Security Institute have exposed the challenges regarding management, transparency and accountability that this institution faces.

18. A significant advance was made in modernizing the State with the adoption of decentralization laws, the Councils of Development and the Municipal Code. It was noted that the taxation structure as well as the mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring transparency could be strengthened.

19. A positive step in this regard is the progress made in creating a Taxation Agreement towards a more comprehensive taxation policy in Guatemala. Many commitments regarding these Taxation Agreements had been made previously, but most of them had focused mainly on income, leaving behind such important areas as management and distribution.

III. United Nations coordination and partnership

20. The signing of Guatemala's Peace Accords in December 1996 almost coincided with the United Nations reform, launched in 1997 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. By that time, MINUGUA and 16 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes represented in the country had begun working closely to implement the Peace Accords. Because of this, the activities of peace-building, the United Nations Operational Activities for Development and the country team have been closely interlinked

21. Within the framework of the Peace Accords and United Nations reform, the Guatemala country team worked towards achieving the goals of strengthening collaboration and ensuring greater coherence among the country programmes in support of national priorities.

22. During 1997-1998, to prepare for the elaboration of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the country team conducted workshops, inter-agency retreats, country team meetings, presentations and a dissemination of information about the reform process to different development actors. Initially, Guatemala was one of two pilot countries selected to move ahead on the country-level reform process. To facilitate this effort, the Government of Sweden supported a project, "Promoting change: a country team response to calls for United Nations Reform".

23. This process led, in 2000, to an important achievement: the creation of the CCA and UNDAF, a common vision of the response needed to achieve peace, development, security and human rights. The UNDAF highlighted the need to address social and economic exclusion, disparities, discrimination against indigenous peoples, reproductive health, education, democratic governance and the rule of law on the national peace-building and development agenda.

24. On October 2002, as a follow-up to the reform guidelines and recommendations, the United Nations carried out an evaluation of the CCA/UNDAF process to determine its operational efficiency, requirements and modifications needed.

25. The following year, on 12 June, the country team agreed on a new chronogram of the CCA/UNDAF process, allowing for the harmonized programme cycles of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP to begin in January 2005. Meanwhile, the country team planned to elaborate the new CCA and UNDAF documents from June 2003 to March 2004. This process, which took into account a human rights-based approach, included several training sessions conducted from June to October 2003 for the country team, staff members of the United Nations system and several national partners.

26. On 3 February 2004, the consolidated CCA draft was sent to Regional Readers Groups in Panama, who will evaluate the document in light of the existing guidance on the CCA/UNDAF process. The country team continued to work on the UNDAF, which was finished by April 2004. At the same time, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP continued to plan their respective country programmes.

27. Inter-agency theme groups have also been important tools for the United Nations in Guatemala, including for strengthening coordination and joint programming. The groups, whose agendas reflect the cross-cutting commitments of the Peace Accords and the Millennium Development Goals, form a common framework for joint actions of the United Nations system. They also facilitate dialogue and coordinated actions among the United Nations system, civil society, government and other actors in the international community.

28. There are clear signs of progress being made towards achieving more coordination, collaboration and coherence among the funds, agencies and programmes of the United Nations in Guatemala in various areas, including information-sharing, advocacy and policy-making, the establishment and functioning of the inter-agency theme groups, planning activities, and the implementation of programmes as well as their monitoring and evaluation.

29. These efforts have resulted in concrete outcomes. Among the most important is a series of documents that includes five thematic Human Development Reports, a Millennium Development Goals report,[3] an assessment of the Nutrition and Food Security situation, a Nutrition and Food Security Strategic Document, the HIV/AIDS Implementation Support Plan, the CCA and UNDAF documents and a Socio-economic Database. Importantly, the publication of these documents was characterized by a participatory process that involved civil society as well as the international community and benefited from the growing leadership of the Government and its increasing ownership of the CCA/UNDAF process. In order to ensure full government ownership of the UNDAF, finalization of the document was delayed in order to obtain more clarity on the priorities of the new administration.

30. The coordinated efforts of the United Nations system in Guatemala have also contributed to the establishment of key mechanisms, processes and institutions[4] promoting progress.

[3] The second such report in the Latin American and the Caribbean region.

[4] These include, for example, the Multisectoral Table of Dialogue on Indigenous Issues, the Trust Fund for productive projects in favour of uprooted populations and the Socio-economic Database.

31. There were several examples of collaborative programmes of the country team in which two or more agencies, funds or programmes were working together in a geographical area for specific outcomes that accorded with national priorities and the Millennium Development Goals.[5] Crucial elements to support the sustainability of these efforts will include the development of policies and legislative frameworks, capacity-building, particularly at the municipal or local levels, and community empowerment, including in conducting a social audit.

32. Among the most positive aspects of these collaborative efforts, outcomes and processes are the following: (a) policy dialogue and development, as evidenced by the Agenda for Human Development (2003), the Law on Social Development (2001), the Law on Integrated Protection of Children and Adolescents (2003); (b) institution- and capacity-building at all levels, e.g., for municipalities, the Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women, the Secretariat of Women's Affairs, youth peer-support groups; and (c) community empowerment.

33. Many challenges remain, as already noted by previous missions, in particular the mission of the United Nations Development Group in 2002. Concerns include the following: the scarcity of explicit quantifiable results attributable to the United Nations system action, even though it is presumed that the United Nations has contributed to several successes in nearing the Millennium Development Goals; a lack of documentation and analysis of the impact of collaborative efforts on transaction costs; a weak dissemination of some of the documents produced; a weak link between some of the inter-agency theme groups and decision-making, the operational level and the UNDAF; dysfunctions of some of the inter-agency theme groups; and constraints resulting from limited financial and human resources. It was also noted that CCA/UNDAF process was quite time-consuming and overstretched the capacities of most agencies, funds or programmes. Examples were also evident of missed opportunities for effective collaboration due to an insufficiently integrated and comprehensive approach to local development. Finally, it was observed that Resident Coordinator lacked sufficient resources to fulfil the responsibilities of the function.

34. While some aspects of joint programming — particularly planning — are being implemented and while collaborative programming has taken place, there are areas for improvement. The renewed commitment of the new administration to the Peace Accords and the forthcoming finalization of the UNDAF documents present opportunities for increased collaboration and for the development of joint programmes where relevant, feasible, and likely to be efficient and effective. While the country team has indicated that Food Security would likely be a joint programme, it seems that HIV/AIDS and the Socio-economic Database could also be considered.

35. Given that United Nations agencies, funds and programmes will shortly be taking over many responsibilities of MINUGUA, which at the height of its presence in Guatemala employed around 500-600 people, had an annual budget over $30 million and operated 14 offices across the country, it is important to consider the limited presence and resources of several of the agencies, funds and programmes, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations

[5] These programmes included, for example, the Geographical Information System of Chiquimula, the Nutritional Recuperation Center in Jocotán, the Food Security and Development Table or the youth-friendly health centre in Camotán.

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and HABITAT.

36. The asymmetry that exists among the agencies, funds and programmes in terms of staff and resources could limit the potential of United Nations cooperative efforts to promote sustainability of the Peace Accords and to support the State and civil society in the peace-building process.

IV. Project visits

(For a list of the projects visited, see annex II.)

Key questions

How is the United Nations country team implementing the agenda of simplification and harmonization?

37. In order to assess the implementation of simplification and harmonization by the country team in Guatemala, it is important to bear in mind the complex context of a country in a post-conflict situation in which support for implementation of the Peace Accords is complementary to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

38. Important elements of the process are being implemented. These include the harmonization of country programme cycles starting in January 2005, the use of common premises and the achievement of positive synergy between the heads of the agencies, funds and programmes and among their staff. There are also many areas of coordination and mutual support in the implementation of some projects in the field. It is important to highlight the fact that coordination with national authorities at the highest level is actively promoted to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations system, even with limited resources.

39. Among the challenges to implementing the agenda of simplification and harmonization, the most significant are, first, the need for significantly more staff time to be devoted to planning and implementation, and, second, the limited human and financial resources available. It is important also to bear in mind that, in some areas, the priorities of the national authorities define and set bounds to the work of the United Nations system.

40. Another challenge is posed by the restrictive implementation of specific mandates of each of the agencies, funds and programmes, which contributes to limiting progress in simplification and harmonization. To overcome this constraint, strong attention should be paid to creating new incentives to strengthen participation in joint programming. As one possibility, assessment of the performance of heads of agencies, funds and programmes could cover the area of collaborative activity in addition to specific mandates.

How effective is the United Nations system in supporting the Peace Accords and the Millennium Development Goals?

41. The United Nations system plays a strategic and key role in supporting the Peace Accords and the Millennium Development Goals in Guatemala. Public recognition of this role was noted throughout the field visit.

42. With the upcoming departure of MINUGUA from Guatemala, the country team will have to assume an important role in post-MINUGUA follow-up, particularly in the fields of human rights and political and socio-economic monitoring as well as advocacy with the Government, political parties, civil society and the private sector.

43. In light of this change, it is important to highlight the need to improve the coordination and coherence of the Secretariat of the United Nations and the agencies, funds and programmes, with the view to ensuring they have the necessary human and financial resources to fulfil their new responsibilities. In particular, it could be beneficial to strengthen the presence of several agencies, funds or programmes in Guatemala, such as UNESCO, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ILO, FAO and HABITAT.

44. On the other hand, significant efforts have been made to support fulfilment of the commitments of the Peace Accords, and these are allowing the country to make strides towards meeting certain social goals and improving specific indicators. Nevertheless, there are still social groups that are lagging behind, especially indigenous groups in several regions of the country and in the rural area in general. Some statistics showing significant progress do not adequately reflect this situation and the challenges ahead.

45. Though some trends are encouraging, it is difficult to assess the probability of Guatemala attaining the Millennium Development Goals, as the country is vulnerable to natural disasters and economic crisis that can hobble progress. This vulnerability was seen in the negative consequences of the 2001 droughts and the drastic reduction of coffee prices. The 2003 Millennium Development Goal report points to some areas in which Guatemala is not likely to reach the goals. Efforts must continue in mobilizing resources, especially internal resources, to fund additional development actions. This is especially important, given the greater efforts needed to address the existence of social groups still lagging behind and the expected difficulties in achieving certain goals.

How is the United Nations system working with the IFI and what is the complementarity between the two?

46. The meeting held with the donor community and IFI made it clear that significant levels of coordination exist between these two groups and with the country team. At the meeting, it was also learned that in low- and middle-income countries such as Guatemala, which lacks sufficient national capacity for effective utilization of incoming assistance, donors often outsource the financial administration of the assistance they give to the United Nations and other international organizations that are partners. In this regard, the country team, in coordination with the national authorities, could play a role in strengthening donor coordination.

47. It is important to highlight the active role played by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the process of the negotiation of the Peace Accords in Guatemala, because this unique circumstance allowed the IFI to support the outcome and facilitate the financial community's understanding of the process. The World Bank opened an office in Guatemala after the signing of the Peace Accords.

48. Bearing in mind the comprehensive approach of the Peace Accords with regard to the human and social development in Guatemala, it is important to strengthen the coherence and coordination of the members of the donor community and the IFI at all levels, in order to assure the effectiveness of investments made.

How effective is the Government and the United Nations system in tackling HIV/AIDS?

49. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is spreading rapidly in Guatemala, threatening to restrain efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Estimates indicate that the prevalence rate in the population is 1.1 per cent. Initially, males were the group most affected, but in recent years a rapid feminization of the epidemic has become evident. This implies that it is necessary to extend the national coverage of the programmes to stop mother-to-child transmission of HIV, as accomplished in the successful Programme of the Roosevelt Hospital to Prevent Mother-to-child Transmission, with support from UNICEF. Although, the indigenous, and largely rural, people represent at least 40 per cent of the population, they seem to have a lower risk of infection than that of urban residents. However, indigenous people face an increased risk when they migrate to the urban areas. It is also important to consider that 18.6 per cent of all AIDS cases are found among adolescents and youth 15-24 years old and that young girls face a risk of infection double that of young boys, according to estimates. Access to treatment for HIV/AIDS is very limited, so it is important to promote changes in the law that would facilitate access to generic drugs.

50. The National Strategic Plan 2000-2004, which provided the policy framework for the fight against HIV/AIDS in Guatemala, was developed through a participatory process that included governmental, human rights and civil society organizations, the private sector, and associations of People Living with AIDS, a non-governmental organization. A review of the plan will be conducted in 2004. Meanwhile, $40.9 million has been sourced from the Global Fund on AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, 60 per cent of which is to be used to support programmes providing integral care for infected people.

51. The efforts of the Government in fighting HIV/AIDS are complemented by a United Nations inter-agency group created in 2002 to enhance United Nations support of the national response mechanism, and to monitor the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the goals outlined in A World Fit for Children. The work of the Expanded Theme Groups has been constrained by the need to maintain a harmonious relationship between all stakeholders and assurance of meeting the commitments of the Millennium Development Goals and the outcome document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS. However, some notable achievements have been made in generating political will and leadership and in increasing capacity-building in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Advocacy and sensitization programmes have promoted awareness of the issue and have facilitated broad societal participation in national efforts to address the challenges of the epidemic.

How is the United Nations system responding to children and youth issues?

52. Children constitute half of the population of Guatemala. Consequently, there is a need to focus on their education, health, nutrition, and protection. The involvement of the United Nations system in children's issues accords with the commitments of both the Peace Accords and the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, the Peace Accords explicitly refer to children in sections dealing with human rights, socio-economic conditions and the re-settlement of populations uprooted during the armed conflict. It is in that context that MINUGUA, in collaboration with UNICEF, issued a report in 2000 on monitoring the implementation of child-related provisions of the Peace Accords. In the same vein, the 2003 Millennium Development Goals: report on progress made in Guatemala indicates that progress has been made in primary education and in reducing child mortality as well as in addressing the challenges of gender equity, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS.

53. The United Nations system has been instrumental in supporting the development of child-friendly public policies, such as the Policy for Children and Adolescents, the Policy for Education for all, and the Integrated Protection Law for Children and Adolescents. The United Nations system also supported the elaboration and implementation of the National Plan for reduction of acute malnutrition as a response to the nutritional emergency faced by the country. The agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations have also worked together in the areas of youth health and in monitoring social indicators.

54. The United Nations system should continue its advocacy and support for the creation of legislative and judicial frameworks that support progress, for instance in the fields of water and sanitation, food security and reform of the legal framework regulating adoption of children. Public policies, capacity-building at all levels and social investments benefiting children should be improved.

How is the United Nations system promoting gender equity and supporting gender mainstreaming?

55. Most women in Guatemala are faced with two-fold discrimination on the basis of gender and race. The plight of many of these women is further compounded by a difficult socio-economic climate characterized by extreme poverty, exploitation and various forms of violence. Although the 2003 Millennium Development Goals report indicated that the difference between the literacy rates of men and women has decreased, the rate of progress is lower than required to achieve the target of a one-to-one ratio of literate women and men by 2015. The current maternal mortality rate of 153 per 100,000 live births is also a concern.

56. Following the signing of the Peace Accords, which made specific recommendations with respect to strengthening the role of women in political, economic and social activities at all levels of the Guatemalan society, the country team has in many ways supported both governmental and non-governmental efforts to address gender-related concerns through a multifaceted approach that entails the establishment of national institutions, capacity-building mechanisms and the development of fundamental legal frameworks for the promotion of gender issues. The United Nations system has supported the Secretariat of Women's Affairs as well as the Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women, which spearhead efforts to eliminate discrimination against women and promote their equal participation in all

development activities in their communities. The adoption by Congress of the Social Development Law, which among other provisions, gives critical policy guidance on issues related to reproductive health and family planning, further attests to the efforts of the United Nations on gender issues.

57. The Gender Equality Thematic Group has fostered gender mainstreaming in United Nations strategic plans, such as the CCA and UNDAF. Yet there is still a need for the agencies, funds and programmes to define a joint strategy for effectively operationalizing the gender perspective in United Nations programmes and projects, including through capacity-building for women and girls. Similarly, gender mainstreaming was evident in the 2003 Human Development Report of Guatemala, a sign that on this issue there are some levels of coordination and collaboration among the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations. However, their efforts were not without constraints. A few of the agencies, funds and programmes were unable to adequately complement the efforts of the agencies most actively involved in promoting the agenda on gender.

How is the United Nations system responding to indigenous issues?

58. The Constitution (1985) and the Guatemala Peace Accords (1996), in particular the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, stated that all inhabitants of the Republic are guaranteed all of their rights. Even though the Mayan languages have been "recognized, promoted and respected" by law, this sector of the population, which constitutes more than 40 per cent of the population of Guatemala, according to the Population Census of 2003 (and 60 per cent, according to unofficial sources) continues to be isolated and not adequately represented in the political life and social policy of the country. At the outset, difficulties were caused by the extended use of the more than 20 Mayan languages in a country with Spanish as the only official language. This represented a challenge in areas as diverse as education, health and justice. According to information cited from MINUGUA, almost 40 per cent of the population of this important sector of society continues to live in extreme poverty, and about 80 per cent are poor.

59. Up to now, the indigenous population has not been adequately represented in the political parties of Guatemala and has had a very small presence and participation in public administration. Only two indigenous people have held positions of Minister and Vice-Minister. Nevertheless, at the local level, indigenous people are participating more actively. This is the case, for instance, in the municipalities of Sololá, Santiago Atitlán and Panajachel, which have indigenous mayors. Actions taken continue to improve the participation of the community authorities in different regions. Efforts are under way to help indigenous peoples to overcome discrimination and inequality and to exercise their cultural rights. Efforts are also helping indigenous peoples to gain greater access to basic social services, including education, water and sanitation, electricity and health care, and to be treated fairly in the justice system and benefit from economic development.

60. Gaining access to the justice system presents a complex issue, given the fact that indigenous people are struggling for recognition of their own normative system and indigenous law. There has already been progress in promoting free legal advisory services for people with low economic resources and in facilitating the provision of legal interpreters to indigenous people, thereby reducing the vulnerability of indigenous people to unfair legal practices and imprisonment. There

is also a vast project related to the reform of justice. This includes capacity-building of lawyers, prosecutors and judges to inform them about Mayan traditions and cultural values. The project also aims to inform indigenous communities about the national and international legal standards that have to be respected in Guatemala.

61. Special consideration should be paid to the situation of indigenous women, who face additional problems to those faced by other women in Guatemala. Indigenous women experience a three-fold discrimination for being indigenous, female and poor. In some communities, women have an illiteracy rate as high as 90 per cent. In addition, they are commonly seen as not meriting rights equal to those of men, to whom they are commonly subject.

62. Currently, there is important work under way to promote reproductive health as an umbrella for improving the lives of indigenous women.

63. Another issue of special importance for the indigenous communities is the question of support for the victims of the armed conflict. There is a national programme to manage the peace and reconciliation process, called the Programme for Promoting Dignity and Psychosocial Assistance for the Victims of Armed Conflict, which was developed in 1999 as a forensic anthropological research project in compliance with the Historical Clarification Commission. Since 2002, UNDP has managed support for this project. Activities have also been initiated for providing some form of economic reparation to widows, children and other victims, but up to now no significant progress has been made.

64. One important step forward made by the new administration was the recent appointment of an indigenous woman as chairperson of the Historical Clarification Commission.

65. Similarly, new legislation was adopted to reform the Electoral and Political Parties Laws, with the aim of strengthening the democratic process and facilitating the participation of indigenous communities in municipal elections.

66. MINUGUA's 2001 report, "The indigenous peoples of Guatemala: overcoming discrimination in the framework of the peace agreements", published as part of an overall evaluation of compliance with the Peace Agreements, indicates that most actions envisaged to overcome discrimination and to grant the indigenous peoples their rightful place in the Guatemalan nation have not yet been implemented. For example, the highest levels of poverty are still found in the departments where most of the indigenous people live. Moreover, social exclusion of indigenous peoples extends to coverage of public services. More non-indigenous families have access to drinking water, sanitation and electricity than do indigenous ones. Indigenous peoples also suffer discrimination in terms of poor access to education. Insufficient income, lack of food, lack of access to potable water, the deterioration of the environment and low levels of education are among the factors responsible for the precarious state of health and well-being of indigenous peoples.

67. The United Nations response to the indigenous question focuses on monitoring, advocacy and support for programme interventions. Indeed, either through MINUGUA reports or through the United Nations situation analyses, including the CCA, the special plight of indigenous population is highlighted and monitored. These situation analyses serve as the basis for informed advocacy in favour of the rights of indigenous populations. In addition, many programmes, especially in the rural areas, specifically aim to reach indigenous populations,

through activities that include promoting justice, health, nutrition, sanitation, communication and community empowerment.

What are the key funding issues concerning each agency and the United Nations system in general?

68. In general terms, it was noted that core funds are highly insufficient. Therefore, the agencies, funds and programmes have to make important efforts to raise funds from other sources. Despite the funding constraint, all agencies, funds and programmes have up to now managed to complete their programmes and to fulfil their priorities.

V. Conclusions and lessons learned

Conclusions

69. The overall impression gleaned from the field trip is that the United Nations system's programme assistance in Guatemala has laid the necessary framework to tackle poverty and malnutrition and to support the various dimensions of peace-building and development in the post-conflict situation. This United Nations support, emphasizing progress for the indigenous population, women and children, has helped the country, the Government, local municipalities, and members of civil society to empower actors and stakeholders to continue and expand their programmes in a sustainable way.

70. The involvement of the United Nations system in helping the people and the Government to eradicate poverty and to contribute to human development was regarded as highly valuable by all actors in Guatemalan society encountered throughout the trip.

71. Bearing in mind the complexity of the Guatemalan circumstances, the strategies and programmes implemented by the United Nations system can be considered successful. Since there are strong linkages between the Peace Accords and the Millennium Development Goals, progress made in implementing the Peace Accords implies progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

72. Regarding the simplification and harmonization process, important efforts of the United Nations system to move forward were noted. However, time constraints and limited human and financial resources also were also observed as weaknesses in this process.

73. Involvement of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes has also come in response to emergency situations.[6] Opportunities were identified in these actions whereby all agencies, funds and programmes could act together more cohesively as one system, providing a case study in joint programming.

74. To move forward with this joint effort, the United Nations system has to deal with various challenges, for instance in the fields of strategic planning, accounting and the use of common budgets and resources in the achievement of common ends,

[6] For example, the programme in Jocotán, or following concrete appeal by members of the civil society, as in the programme "*Montaña Azul*" in Santa Lucia, the purpose of which is to resettle uprooted families.

especially the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, creating better institutional incentives for staff to fully support joint programming may be explored.

75. The involvement of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Guatemala — especially through capacity-building — has helped to strengthen the resolve of the people to have a new voice in managing their affairs and to create a better future. This is a big achievement in a country that for such a long time was under authoritarian rule and excluded indigenous peoples from full participation.

76. The United Nations system plays a strategic role in supporting the Peace Accords and the Millennium Development Goals in Guatemala. It is important, therefore, to improve the coordination and coherence among all agencies, funds and programmes in order to better fulfil this role. As part of this effort, an assessment is needed of the requirements for transferring responsibilities from MINUGUA to the country team. In particular, it is important to decide which resources and infrastructure can be transferred to the Resident Coordinator's office so that it can adequately meet its new responsibilities.

Lessons learned for future visits

77. For future joint visits, members of the Executive Boards noted the importance of clarifying beforehand the process of preparation and adoption of the agendas as well as the objectives and purposes of the visits. This effort should take into account relevant guidelines and resolutions of the agencies, funds and programmes as well as those of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, especially the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review. Therefore, it was suggested that at least two weeks prior to future visits, an advance mission from the United Nations system in the field come to New York to meet with members of the Executive Boards to share with them not only substantive documents but also a comprehensive view of the work done in the field. This important groundwork should contribute to achieving more flexibility in setting the objectives and purposes of future visits.

78. Another important lesson learned was that members of the Executive Boards need more time to meet, talk and reflect on information and experiences shared after any visits to projects in the field.

79. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial for members of the Executive Boards to have more interaction with the main actors or beneficiaries of the projects implemented by the agencies, funds and programmes in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the objectives, achievements and shortcomings of these projects.

80. In terms of communicating their findings of the trip, the participants thought it would be important to more widely disseminate information about their experiences. It was suggested that the report of the visit should be posted on the web sites of all Executive Boards involved. In addition, the United Nations radio and television system could play a role, perhaps by interviewing some members of the mission or by preparing documentaries of the visit.

81. Finally, all members of the Executive Boards would like to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to all those involved in the visit, in particular the United Nations country team, who made huge collective and individual efforts to support the visit, as well as the Government of Guatemala for its great hospitality and willingness to collaborate with those involved in the mission.

ANNEX I

List of participants in the field visit by members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP to Guatemala, March 21 to April 2, 2004

Head of Delegation
H.E. Mr. Eduardo Sevilla Somoza
Permanent Representative of Nicaragua
UNICEF

Rapporteur
Mr. Carlos Enrique Garcia Gonzalez
Minister Counsellor
Permanent Mission of El Salvador
UNDP/UNFPA

Mr. Shozab Abbas
Third Secretary
Permanent Mission of Pakistan
UNDP/UNFPA

Ms. Ewa Anzorge
First Secretary
Permanent Mission of Poland
UNDP/UNFPA

H.E. Mr. Hynek Kmonicek
Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic
UNDP/UNFPA

Mr. Lazare Makayat-Safouesse
First Counsellor
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Congo
UNDP/UNFPA

Mr. Felix Mbayu
Minister Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Cameroon
UNDP/UNFPA

Mr. Jean-Robert Moret
Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Switzerland
UNDP/UNFPA

Ms. Susana Rivero
Minister
Deputy Permanent Representative of Uruguay
UNDP/UNFPA

Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa
Minister Plenipotentiary
Deputy Permanent Representative of Nepal
UNDP/UNFPA

Ms. Ank Willem
Desk Officer
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands
UNDP/UNFPA

Mr. Pelle Enarsson
First Secretary
Permanent Mission of Sweden
UNICEF

Ms. Mavis Kusorgbor
First Secretary
Permanent Mission of Ghana
UNICEF

Mr. Mehdi Mirafzal
First Counsellor
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran
UNICEF

Mr. Evgeny Stanislavov
Senior Counsellor
Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation
UNICEF

H.E. Mr. Anwarul Bar Chowdhury
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
WFP

Mr. Seraj Addin S.A. Essa
Counsellor
Permanent Representation of Libya
WFP

H.E. Mr. Freddy Numberi
Permanent Representative of Indonesia
WFP

Mr. Milan Paksi
Counsellor
Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic
WFP

H.E. Mr. Alfredo Nestor Puig Pino
Permanent Representative of Cuba
WFP

H.E. Mr. Guntram Freiherr von Schenck
Permanent Representative of Germany
WFP

ANNEX II

List of projects visited in the field

Wednesday, 24 March

1. Programmatic Approach for Democratic Governance and Citizens Participation within the framework of the Department Development Councils of Chiquimula.
2. Geographic Information System (GIS) of the Department of Chiquimula.
3. Strengthening of advocacy capacity by the Indigenous Maya Chorti Council (*Consejo Indígena Maya Chorti, COIMCH*)

Thursday, 25 March

1. Participation in the Food Security and Development Table meeting.
2. Nutritional Recuperation Center, Municipality of Jocotán, Chiquimula.
3. Irrigation System. Settlement El Zarzal, Village Shupa, Municipality of Camotán, Chiquimula.
4. Improving Reproductive Health Services and Contraceptive Commodities, Chiquimula.

Friday, 26 March

1. Meeting with the Department Governor of Sololá, Mr. Julio Adalberto Urrea Ruiz and local authorities of Panajachel.

Saturday, 27 March

1. Promoting Reproductive Rights of Young Tzutujiles Women (Sololá, Rxiin Tnamet)
2. Xibalbai, Sololá, Food Security Project
3. Access to Justice: Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women (*Oficina de la Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena*)

Monday, 29 March

1. Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV Visit to Roosevelt Hospital. Guatemala City.
2. Administration of Justice. Visit to a Centre of Assisted Liberty for Adolescents. Strengthening of the Probation Programme and Creation of the Community Service Programme. Guatemala City.
3. Meeting with Representatives of the Political Parties of Guatemala to discuss the National Shared Agenda. (Multiparty Dialogue Programme).
4. Administration of Justice. Visit to the Programme for the Dignity and Psychosocial Assistance for Victims of Armed Conflict (*Programa de Dignificación y Asistencia Psicosocial a víctimas del enfrentamiento armado, DIGAP*)

Tuesday, 30 March

1. Support to Food-insecure Households in the Resettlement Process in Gaining and Preserving Goods and Services. Peasants Associative Enterprise. Montañas Azules, Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa, Escuintla.
2. Social Communication for the Reduction of Maternal Mortality. Guatemala City.
3. Supporting the Population Census 2002. Guatemala City.
4. Population Education. Guatemala City.

Wednesday, 31 March

1. Meeting with the Representatives of UNAIDS and Representatives of the Extended Theme Group on HIV/AIDS.
2. Meeting with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (*Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Guatemala, MINUGUA*).
3. Separate meetings with Representatives of four agencies in each respective agency office.

ANNEX III

Proposed organization and structure of future joint field visits of the Executive Boards

1. One half-day preparatory meeting: Resident Coordinator to present current CCA/UNDAF documents and provide an introduction to the United Nations country team to be visited. Either by video-link or in combination with other mission travel to New York, one to three months prior to the field trip.

2. Two and a half days of a joint start to the mission: Meeting with government representatives, the United Nations country team and individual United Nations agencies, funds or programmes, civil society representatives and the donor community (including IFI).

3. One and a half to two and a half days of project visits in the capital.

4. Two to three days of projects visits in the field.

5. One day of debriefing, wrap-up, exchange of views among the members of the Executive Boards.

6. One day of press briefings and meetings with the Government.

The total duration of the joint field trip should not exceed 10 working days, excluding travel time. The itinerary should take into account time for travel within the country and the necessity of allocating adequate time within the structure of the programme for consultations among members of the mission after each substantive session of the programme. These consultations would take place, for example, following meetings with the Government, the country team, civil society groups and donors, and after project visits in the capital and outside the capital.